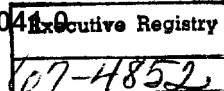


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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

16 October 1967

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Soviet Reaction to Secretary McNamara's 18 September Speech

1. The initial Soviet public reaction to Secretary McNamara's speech revealed nothing about the USSR's policy intentions, either political or military. It was not even reported for three days; then the Soviet radio and press began characterizing the US ABM decision, though in a low key, as another effort "to step up the arms race." While Soviet reporting has drawn heavily on Western press comment on Mr. McNamara's speech, it has thus far failed to mention either his assertion that the US deployment is to be directed primarily against the potential Chinese nuclear threat or his proposal for US-Soviet negotiations on strategic arms limitations -- omissions that are generally consistent with Soviet public handling of similar US official statements since late 1966. (By contrast,

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East European comment has for the most part included references to the Chinese orientation of the US deployment and has cited Mr. McNamara's call for negotiations.)

2. Although Secretary McNamara's speech contained little that was new to the Soviet leadership on the existing strategic relationship between the US and the Soviet Union, it was by far the most comprehensive US statement on the implications of that relationship. The development of Soviet strategic forces has indicated acceptance of the general propositions enunciated by Mr. McNamara: the necessity of a credible deterrent, the importance of an assured destruction capability, and the impossibility of acquiring a first strike capability. However, Secretary McNamara's speech went a step further by making a most direct and forceful public appeal for stabilizing the US-Soviet strategic relationship and for arresting the upward spiral of arms competition.

3. Secretary McNamara's speech probably has intensified debate among Soviet political leaders over the desirability of seeking an arrangement with the US to curb strategic arms competition. The announcement of the US ABM decision also has probably

renewed pressures against a negotiated solution of the armaments issue and for extending Soviet ABM defenses, now deployed only at Moscow, to other areas of the country. The pressures for such an extension are strong, as evidenced by Soviet military statements over the past year, but counter-pressures stemming from political, technological, and economic considerations have probably also been brought to bear by elements in the civilian leadership.

Evidences of Past Soviet Debate Over the ABM Issue

4. The evidence is mostly indirect, but it appears that a debate was provoked within the Soviet political and military leadership by US public and private invitations beginning late last year to discuss measures for achieving an ABM moratorium within the context of a broader strategic arms control agreement. The US effort included public statements by Secretaries McNamara and Rusk, major diplomatic moves, and a private invitation to Kosygin from President Johnson in January. In the Soviet regime's first public response to these proposals, Kosygin, at his February press conference in London, justified the development of an ABM system on the grounds that it was "defensive" in character.

However, he seemed to leave the door open to negotiations by hedging on the question of what specific "terms" the USSR would regard as acceptable for an agreement to curb the arms race. Shortly after his return to the USSR, a PRAVDA article by commentator Burlatskiy (who has since been fired, ostensibly for other reasons) attributed to Kosygin a statement supporting an ABM moratorium that was not contained in the official record of the Soviet premier's remarks. Burlatskiy alleged that Kosygin had professed the Soviet government's willingness to discuss questions related to both "offensive" and defensive" weapons in the interest of averting a "further arms race."

5. The impression that the Burlatskiy article was motivated by partisan interests was supported by subsequent statements attributed to "official" sources in Moscow, contradicting Burlatskiy. According to items carried by Western news agencies, reliable Soviet sources had expressed embarrassment over the "mistaken" impression conveyed by the Burlatskiy article and reaffirmed the regime's opposition to a negotiated settlement of the ABM issue "at present." These same sources were also

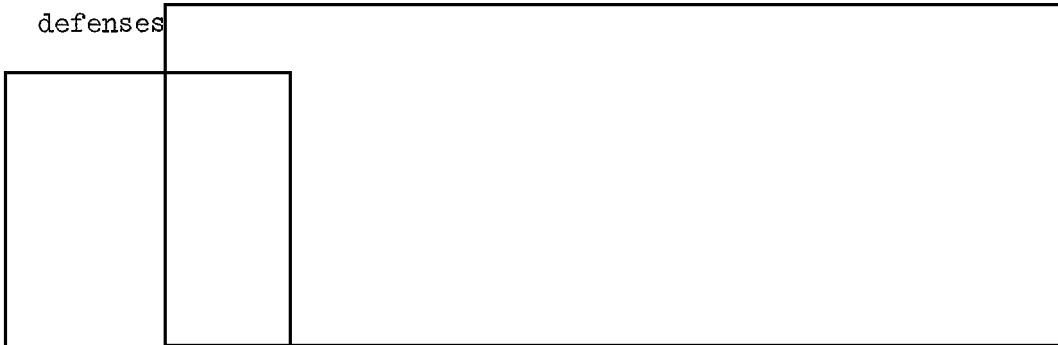
reported as saying that a "new article" laying down the regime's negative position was forthcoming. In fact, no such public statement was ever issued, but President Johnson disclosed in early March that he had received a response from Kosygin to his January letter which expressed Soviet willingness to discuss measures for controlling strategic offensive and defensive weapons.

6. If the Soviet political leaders during the early part of this year had not made up their minds on how to handle the matter of seeking a negotiated solution of the arms issue, there were signs that the military -- or at least important elements within it -- were clearly opposed to negotiations that might lead to a discontinuation or postponement of the Soviet ABM effort. The military disposition towards the issue was revealed in a RED STAR article at the end of March which was authored by a prominent and persistent proponent of a vigorous ABM policy. The importance of the article derived not only from its pointed support of the "very great national" and "strategic" importance of antimissile

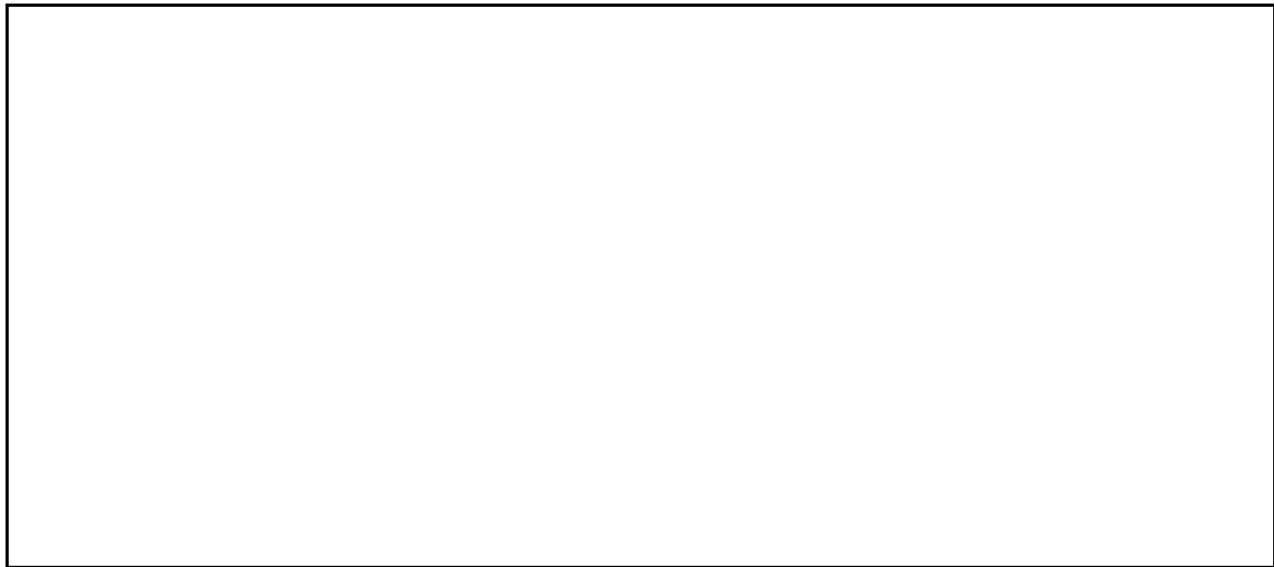
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Impact of US ABM Decision on Soviet Programs

7. Judging from previous controversy within the Soviet leadership over the ABM issue, we believe that Secretary McNamara's announcement of the US deployment decision is likely to intensify military pressures for continuing, if not expanding, existing strategic weapons development and deployment programs. Since the political leadership's decisions on military matters have come to depend more and more on technological considerations, the advice of the technically trained military officer, who commands this knowledge, has become a major factor in decisions on national security questions. Moreover, we doubt that either the civilian or military leaders will be much swayed by the announced orientation of the US program against the potential Chinese threat. For one thing, even this limited US ABM deployment will have some effect on Soviet strategic capabilities. For another, as Mr. McNamara said, the defense of US ICBM sites is intended to strengthen the US retaliatory capability against Soviet attack. Finally, the Soviets are aware that the US ABM system is based on a "building block" concept which permits its enlargement to any desired level

by the addition of more radars and launchers. Thus, some Soviet leaders will argue that they must anticipate the worst, that is, a massive expansion of the US ABM system.

8. We do not believe, however, that the US decision will result in any sudden or dramatic change in the Soviet armament effort. Soviet decisions regarding the size and composition of its strategic forces are responsive to the total US strategic posture, both present and prospective. The Soviets are probably concerned more at this time with planned improvements in US strategic attack forces, which present a direct threat, than with the strengthening of US defenses, which they probably anticipated when they chose to embark on a limited ABM deployment themselves. Moreover, any Soviet military response to the US deployment will be limited by the decisions the Soviets have already taken. The Soviets have already launched weapons programs which will offer improved capabilities for penetrating missile defenses. They are currently deploying a new 16-tube ballistic missile submarine and they are testing what we believe to be components for a fractional orbit bombardment system (FOBS). While the missile



submarine was probably originally intended to improve their assured destruction capability, and the FOBS to evade sophisticated US radar devices, both could be employed to vary the avenues of attack and thus complicate the US defense problem.

9. An obvious counter to an ABM system is saturation, and there will undoubtedly be pressures in Moscow for an expansion of the Soviet ICBM forces. Such pressures have been evident now and again for some time. An article last fall in the Ministry of Defense publication KOMMUNIST OF THE ARMED FORCES, for example, emphasized the inadequacy of a minimum deterrent posture and underscored the importance of Soviet achievement of a position of military "superiority" in the "quantity and quality of weapons" -- a concept the Soviets discuss rather infrequently in public. A more pointed argument for expanding and improving Soviet strategic attack forces was made recently by Marshal Krylov. Evidently on behalf of his own institutional interests as head of the strategic rocket forces, Krylov seemed to argue for the introduction of "new" and "more perfected" offensive weapons into the Soviet strategic arsenal.

10. Despite such pressures from the military establishment, Soviet leaders are likely to take into consideration the fact that any significant increase in the number of ICBM launchers would carry the risk that the US would respond by equalling or overmatching their efforts. Therefore, they will probably consider less costly measures to counter US defenses. Given the attention in the US to equipping its strategic attack forces with penetration aids, multiple re-entry vehicles (MRVs) and multiple independently-targeted re-entry vehicles (MIRVs) and with the high state of Soviet defense technology, we believe that the Soviets could develop and deploy similar devices prior to the full operational deployment of the US ABM system. The Soviets might calculate that such an effort would not only be the most promising military move at this juncture -- particularly in terms of cost-effectiveness -- but would be least likely to stimulate a major US reaction.

11. The extension of Soviet ABM defenses to other areas of the country is almost certainly under continuing review. The proponents of a further ABM deployment are energetic and determined

and are firmly entrenched within the military establishment. They probably argue that a single area defense would be ineffective under nuclear war conditions with the US and that expenditures already made are likely to be wasted unless the system is developed to its potential. In this connection, General Batitskiy, head of the Soviet antiaircraft defenses, recently reemerged to argue that, because of new and sophisticated means of missile attack, it was necessary to organize and to improve qualitatively Soviet anti-air defenses "on the territory of the entire country." We believe that Soviet failure to initiate new ABM deployment over the past five years can be attributed primarily to technical problems. When these are resolved to their satisfaction, the Soviets will probably consider further ABM deployment outside the Moscow area, and they are likely to undertake improvements in their ABM defense to include coverage in the direction of China -- a capability which they do not now possess.

#### Prospects for Arms Control

12. We feel that after assessing the impact of the US deployment decision on their own strategic weapons programs, the

Soviets are most likely to view qualitative improvements in their strategic attack forces as the most satisfactory choice among alternative responses to the US initiative. They may regard such a course as the best suited to improve their own deterrent capabilities and the least likely to contribute to a major upwards spiral in arms competition with the US. Approaching a position of relative numerical parity in ICBM launchers with the US and understanding that current US programs are aimed at qualitative improvements of its existing strategic attack forces rather than additional deployment, the Soviets probably would judge that any major acceleration in strategic offensive and defensive deployment would provoke a US response.

13. It is possible that these considerations will influence the Soviet leadership to seek some arrangement with the US for limiting the further deployment of strategic weapons. We do not believe that the Soviets will hold Secretary McNamara's call for a US-Soviet agreement to be directly negotiable, but they may see economic and other advantages in a voluntary limitation of strategic arms on both sides. A tacit understanding with the US

would present less bureaucratic obstacles to surmount on the Soviet side and would be more consistent with Moscow's style. Soviet intentions on this score may emerge only gradually and indirectly and not in a formal or deliberate fashion. Accordingly, they may be conveyed only through an examination of future Soviet military policy decisions and deployment activities. It is also possible that the Soviets might give indication of their general intentions in the course of further diplomatic exchanges.

FOR THE BOARD OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES:

SHERMAN KENT  
Chairman

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Director

Herewith the longer look at Soviet reactions to the McNamara speech which I promised. You may wish to keep this at hand in case the subject comes up, ~~but~~ I do not propose to circulate this piece *anywhere beyond you - unless you so request.*

We will keep this problem in mind and give you our views if more evidence becomes available.

*Sherman* I agree. It would not be timely to circulate this now. Let's keep it in the back burner, and trot it out at an appropriate time.

SHERMAN KENT

16 October 67  
(DATE)

FORM NO. 101 REPLACES FORM 10-101  
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